

MISSION FOR THE SEVENTIES

I find it a little hard to believe that only sixty years ago, Walter Rauschenbusch, the flaming prophet of the new theology of the twentieth century, could look around him at the world of 1912 and declare with satisfaction, "The longest and hardest part of Christianizing the social order has been done." <sup>1</sup> It was an age of hope. Too much hope. *I was*

*the pendulum* <sup>to the other side</sup> *then* <sup>the pendulum</sup> *has swung* <sup>to the other side</sup> *again* <sup>to the other side</sup> *and* <sup>to the other side</sup> *is* <sup>to the other side</sup> *back* <sup>to the other side</sup> *to the other side* <sup>to the other side</sup> *of the* <sup>to the other side</sup> *same* <sup>to the other side</sup> *old* <sup>to the other side</sup> *swing* <sup>to the other side</sup> *of* <sup>to the other side</sup> *the* <sup>to the other side</sup> *pendulum* <sup>to the other side</sup> *of* <sup>to the other side</sup> *hope* <sup>to the other side</sup> *and* <sup>to the other side</sup> *despair.*

What a contrast today. One of our day\*s most respected prophets of a new theology, Paul Tillich, has said just the opposite, "There is no hope," he says. "There is no hope for a final stage of history in which peace and justice rule." It is unfair of course to judge <sup>Tillich</sup> him by an isolated sentence, but *that sentence* <sup>he</sup> *catches* the mood of the day--discouragement and despair.

*But* the Bible, as usual, is better balanced than any theologian. Once it corrected Rauschenbusch with ~~its~~ a ~~xxx~~ ~~ix~~ sobering reminder of the pervasive power of human sin. Today we need not so much a Biblical balance against Rauschenbusch's over-optimism as against Tillich's un-Biblical over-pessimism.

There are three popular, <sup>not</sup> pessimistic views <sup>widely current in</sup> of the world today to which I take strong exception. It is almost axiomatic in some circles:

1. First, that the human race is near its end.
2. Second, that if, somehow, the human race manages to survive, at least the Church is near its end.
- 3/ Third, that if, somehow, Christianity manages to survive, at least the missionary movement is near its end.

But what I want to dare to suggest is that these axioms of despair are neither Christian, nor Biblical nor true. Not a single one of them.

The first gloomy concensus is that man is about to commit suicide. "The curse of modern man," said Newsweek recently (Jan 26 1970, p. 23), "(is) continually to confront new possibilities of self-destruction." <sup>Which faces us with death by famine or suffocation.</sup> The most obvious <sup>of these</sup> <sup>of</sup> course, are nuclear weaponry, the population explosion and pollution. How curiously parallel to the ancient Biblical omens, <sup>in the Bk. of Rev.</sup> "the riders in the sky", the horsemen of the Apocalypse: famine, war and plague. And there was a fourth horseman who rode a pale horse, and his name was Death. (R. v. 6:1-8). We probably live closer to death today than the human race has ever lived before.

*Don't worry I'm not calling them "signs of the times" - some would say that. There are signs that have always been with us*

The white horse is the plague. Not just disease - any plague, ~~is~~ <sup>in instance</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> Even the slowest <sup>of these deaths</sup> <sup>a man-made</sup> death by pollution, <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ coming downwind fast, like the plague, ~~xxx~~ <sup>the</sup> The rider on the white horse. The second horse is black, famine. Compounded by the poisoning mushrooming of world population - [we may soon be doubling the world's population every ten years--the problem is lack of food.] Already between 20 to 30 million people die every year from malnutrition. [And Dr. Paul Ehrlich of Stanford warns <sup>in the</sup> that as early as the mid-70s ~~the~~ the world's "time of famines" will begin, such massive and prolonged famines as the world has never seen before.]

*It is just the opposite. The fundamental way the Bible says we must have faith is whether we can say the word we wonder if we can save the church.*

*Rev. 6: 35 f.*



You can almost smell death by pollution coming downwind fast in every major city in the world. And famine - compounded by the population explosion - already 20 to 30 million people die of malnutrition every year.

But still the ~~x~~ quickest way to end the human race, of course, is by the bomb. The rider on the red horse is war.

*But Jesus warned us not to read too much into the "signs of the times." In a little allegory to "do-it-yourself" prophecy.*

On the other hand, there is always the disappointing possibility that the end will not be dramatic at all. That man will simply come unwound:-- a hundred little unended wars, a thousand little bombs, a million computers all going wrong at once, a billion traffic jams, three billion nervous breakdowns--and pprof, the end.

This is the way the world ends,  
This is the way the world ends,  
This is the way the world ends,  
Not with a bang, but a whimper.

*But this way, we probably*

*There was a fourth horseman in the Book of Rev. He rode a pale horse and his name was Death. (Rev. 6:1-5). We probably live closer to death - the death of mankind - today than the human race has ever lived before.*

In a world without hope, on the edge of the abyss, what is the mission and message of the church? Is it to add doom to doom, and threaten judgment? I do not think so. [It may have once been appropriate in the dear dead days of inevitable progress and Walter Rauschenbusch.] But it is no denial of judgment--and there is no escaping judgment--to hold out hope, and what our world most needs to hear about these days is hope. As a matter of fact, if it does not hear about real hope from us, how easily it turns to the false. [Listen to its songs:]

When the moon is in the seventh house  
And Jupiter aligns with Mars,  
Then peace will guide the plants  
And love will rule the stars.

That is what the world wants, but it will never find it in the stars. It is, however, precisely what the gospel offers. And our mission is to tell the world about it. In a world that fears the ~~x~~ end of man, the Holy Spirit is calling us today to a mission of hope and a ministry of service.

*It might well begin in our own*

Let ~~it~~ begin with a Christian recovery of confidence in man, and a Christian call to involvement in all man's fears and problems. If you call that unevangelical, all I can reply is that it is at least Biblical. The Bible's doctrine of man is not pessimistic. It is the world that is pessimistic, not God. The Bible says four important things about man, mostly good, some bad, but the total is a vote of confidence, not non-confidence. First, man is made in the image of God. That's good. Second, he sinned, and is a sinner. That is bad. But third, God became man. And so, finally, <sup>the human race</sup> man is gloriously redeemable. <sup>He can be saved. That's the basis of our mission.</sup> It was as man that Christ conquered death, and as Christ's man I share in his victory. My Christian mission is to be carried out in the confidence and joy of that victory. John Calvin was not unaware of man's depravity, <sup>of the human race</sup> but he said, <sup>We are called to victory</sup> "It is to triumph we are summoned. We contend with intrepidity (even) against death." (Inst. 2.15.4)

*The human race is not doomed to die.*

Our Christian mission in ~~the~~ <sup>for the world</sup> seventies is a war ~~to the~~ death against death, and gloom and discouragement. Against all the deaths that face the world, against pollution, famine and war, <sup>Above all</sup> as well as against the deeper death of the soul, <sup>and for eternal life</sup> for the full gospel is, as John Owen so long ago put it, "the death of death on the death of Christ." <sup>It's the gospel of the good news -</sup> "In word so joined the world"

*[Handwritten signature]*

It is a war for the world against death. Against all  
the deaths that face the world - against pollution, and famine  
and war, in the name of Christ. Above all, against the deeper death  
of the soul, and for eternal life. It is both/and not ~~or~~ either/or.  
Pollution is unchristian whether it is of the environment, or the body, or  
the mind, or the soul. All ~~these~~ <sup>from</sup> belong to God. And bread is a  
Christian symbol, both as it feeds the body, and as it feeds the  
soul. And peace....

And Peace is a Christian word. How dare <sup>we</sup> you lose it to the New Left. ]

" So this <sup>let</sup> <sup>be</sup> is the first part of your mission ahead. Spread the good news that <sup>our Christian plan is to</sup> For God be loved the world that He gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him should ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> perish... " <sup>the human race</sup> man is not doomed to die. Help <sup>man</sup> him live, and give him hope. ]

II. The second deadly axiom is this: even if, somehow, man survives, Christianity, at least, is near its end.

<sup>Some time ago the Press. Ch. of Canada sent out a questionnaire what people in general thought of the chh.</sup> Its public image: The church, said one reply (to a Presbyterian Church of Canada survey) "is

a grand old dowager, nearly dead, mostly deaf, half blind, (but still) smiling sweetly... hardly a word to say, and capable of little effort." (New World Outlook, Mar. 1970

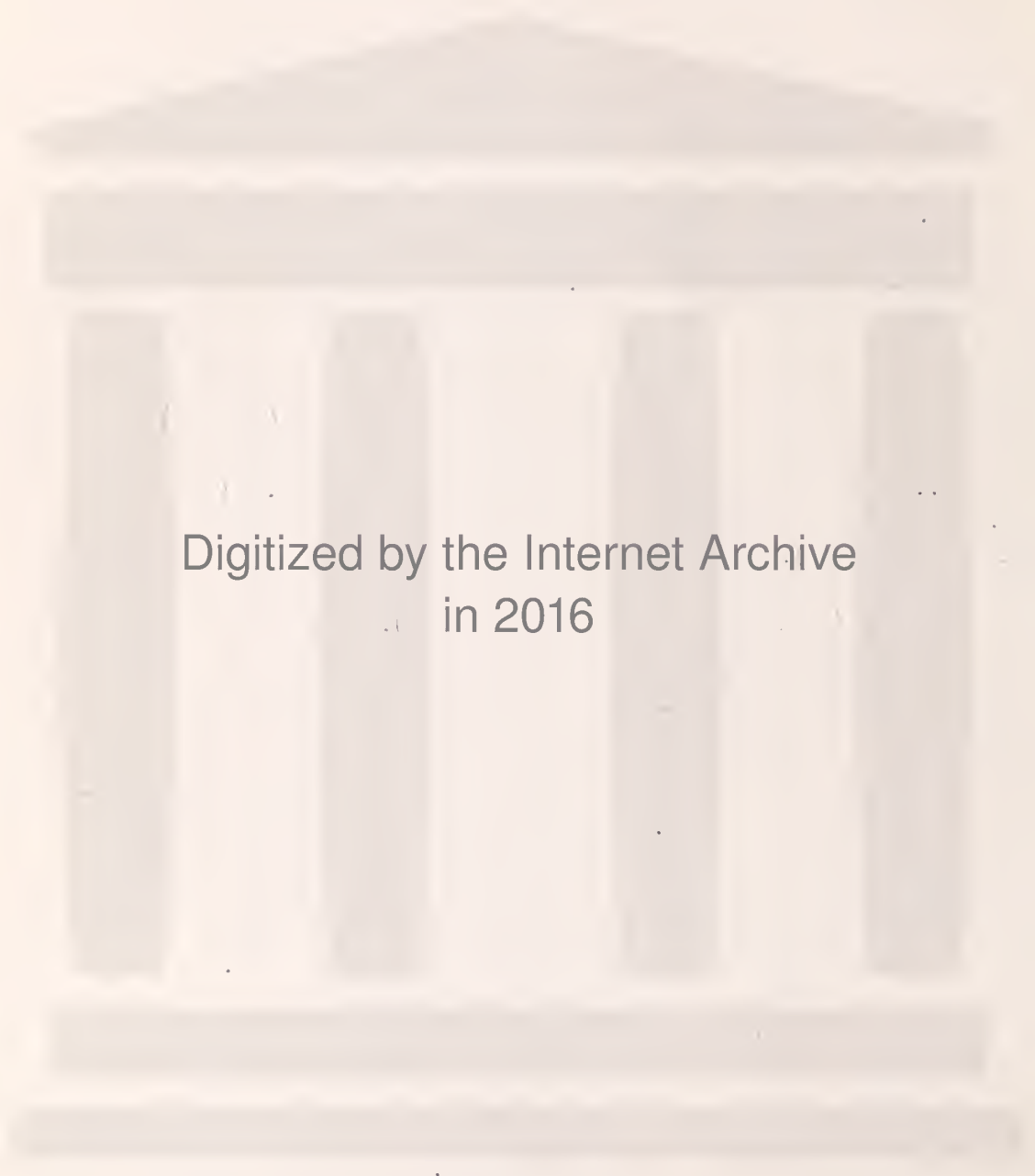
<sup>Our people are leaving. My hope is to see them in the future. They are leaving the church every year now - 20, 30, 50...</sup> July 4, 1969, p. 38). Only one-third of America's Protestants any longer regularly attend church. (Xty. Today, July 4, 1969, p. 38). <sup>And how many churches are we losing every year now - 20, 30, 50...? It's not a hopeful picture.</sup>

Paul Schilling in his God in an Age of Atheism calls our day "a time of doubt and unbelief more extensive and radical than anything experienced in the Western world" in this century. He traces it philosophically back to the atheisms of Feuerbach and Marx and Nietzsche, and on to its popularization in Marxism and Freudianism and atheistic existentialism and scientific humanism. I saw it not so

<sup>just as chillingly on the mission field.</sup>

academically in China. I saw the communists take away from us a third of the world, a part of the world we had been trying to win for Christ for 1300 years, and they took it ~~away from~~ it away from us in less than thirtyk. [The Christian church is retreating outnumbered and outfought before the greatest onslaught it has suffered in 1300 years, since Moslem warriors swelt across North Africa to rip away and destroy one-half of the Christendom of the 7th and 8th centuries.] (But that was only a geographical,

horizontal loss. Today's losses are not only geographical, (as in <sup>Asia</sup> China), they have cut down into the very nerve centers of Christendom and are taking away from us our two <sup>most strategic</sup> reserves: our intellectuals and our youth. <sup>But I am not ready to write of the church as finished.</sup>



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No wonder they say the Church is near its end. In such a day, <sup>discourage</sup> ~~that~~ what <sup>kind of a</sup> ~~is the essence of the~~ Christian mission, <sup>do we need?</sup> The second call of the Spirit in the Seventies, I believe, is a call to revitalize the center. It is a call to ~~reverse~~ reverse the retreat, and it had better begin where the defection is worst, with the world of the intellectual and the world of the young.

~~In both these worlds there seem to be baffling new culture barriers for the Christian to cross, and they are. One can be a rapid growth area, but it is never easy. The world of the intellectual is always both hard and slow to penetrate. If, in Asia, I have seemed to ~~but they can be crossed though~~ growth may be <sup>very</sup> slow. <sup>But</sup> Rapid growth is not the only call of the Spirit, ~~just as~~ It so happened that in discussing Asia I ~~have~~ emphasized ready-response situations as the area of greatest strategic emphasis and opportunity. <sup>Part of the reason for that, is that</sup> ~~But that is because, when Asia is~~ <sup>only 3%</sup> Christian, ~~its~~ <sup>(strategically speaking, a)</sup> under base must be established. That takes priority. But it is not to be interpreted as divine sanction for abandoning slow-growth situations. I do not and cannot believe that the Holy Spirit has written off the Muslims, <sup>for example</sup> And sometimes, particularly where the faith has already spread widely, slow-growth situations may well become of top priority. If an established Christian community begins to lose its intellectuals and its youth, it loses tomorrow. And what ~~And that will have to take priority~~ can have a higher priority than the future?~~

<sup>But</sup> I am not ready to write off tomorrow as lost for the Church. What is happening out on the edge, can happen here. Today's failure can become tomorrow's victory.

Take Africa, for example. Ten years ago Christian statesmen, studying the trends, gloomily conceded that we had lost Africa to Islam. The Crescent was driving our the Cross, steadily, from north to south. And <sup>what</sup> the Mohammedans were missing the communists were picking up. Worst of all, in the extreme south, it seemed almost as if Christians themselves were doing everything possible to make ~~k~~ Africa non-Christian. Can you imagine anything more absurd than white racism as a missionary strategy for winning Africa for Christ. We were not only losing Africa, we deserved to lose it.

That was ten years ago. Today, suddenly, the picture is completely reversed. A whole series of Christian breakthroughs has dramatically reversed the trend. Dave Barrett, the genial evangelical Anglican expert on African ~~national~~ churches predicts that in another ten years Christians will match the Moslems in numbers, and in twenty they will be ahead of them. Already one-third of all African church members are first generation Christians, new Christians. By the year 2000, Barrett says, there will be 350,000,000 Christians in Africa, which, incredibly, is more Christians than there are people in Africa today. (1968: pop. 306,000,000; and Christians 68,000,000)

Here in the "Christian" West, he estimates that in the 100 years from 1900 to 2000, the church will have doubled in size, which means it is not keeping up with the population growth. ~~But~~ in the "third world" of the younger churches, <sup>he says,</sup> mission-churches, in <sup>the</sup> ~~that same~~ 100 years <sup>(from 1900-2000)</sup> the number of Christians will have multiplied 17 times (from 67,000,000 to over 1 billion). And Christianity, incidentally, then, will be <sup>more</sup> colored, <sup>than</sup> not white.

They say that Indonesia is the fastest growing church in the world today. When I looked last, it had 4 million Christians. But just this week I looked again



Mission Ahead - 8 8 8 8 8

and the figure was ~~10~~<sup>8</sup> million, [The second fastest growing church, they say, is Bra<sup>z</sup>il. They can't claw out a ir-fields fa<sup>r</sup>st enough for gospel planes to keep up with its growth. The fastest growth has been among the P<sup>e</sup>ntecostals.]

And Any mention of fast growing churches must include Korea. <sup>Somehow we've got to change the church</sup> But change your image of the mission field if

~~you think of it still in terms of~~ <sup>as</sup> lonely pioneers bea<sup>t</sup>ing through the jungle in pith helmets, ~~converting a~~ cannibal once every few years. My mission field is Seoul, Korea, the tenth largest city in the world. My office <sup>has been</sup> is on the eighth floor of a ten-story building, the C hristian Center Building.

Today we have 600 P<sup>r</sup>otestant churches in that one city alone.

The P<sup>r</sup>otestant community of Korea has probably suffered more from ~~wa<sup>r</sup>s~~ <sup>our last war is still not over - all we have is an armistice</sup> (two of them, and one is not yet over), <sup>suffered more</sup> from church

splits ( where else in the world do you have a Jesus P<sup>r</sup>esby-terian church and a Christ Presbyterian church, and Jesus is not speaking to Christ!), from persecutions <sup>both</sup> (first by Japanese <sup>and communists</sup> Shintoists, then by Russian, Chinese and Korea n communists)--

(it has suffered more such crippling blows) I believe, than any other church in the world. I f any have a right to despair, the Koreans do. Yet I have to <sup>come</sup> back to over-protected, affluent America to hear people whine about the dea<sup>t</sup>h of the church. Not in Korea. There, despite all that it has suffered, [the Korean P<sup>r</sup>otestant community has doubled

in size every ten years since 1940, right through all its troubles

No, the church is not about to die. I t is tougher than you think. It is time <sup>the church of home</sup> you stoppe<sup>d</sup> feeling your pulse,

and got out of bed, and joined us once more in mission, [out-in A-sia, and Africa, and L atin America, not to mention your own great call to revitalize the center.] The Christian mission is

There is a whole world of work to be done - and as Wilson's grandnephew said when someone asked him, "Can you do it?" "Is not dead"

III. But at this point someone is sure to say: "Well, maybe the church won't die, but at least the missionary movement is ended." [That is the third despairing axiom of our time. Here is part of a letter from one of our Presbyterian missionaries a few years ago. It was a letter of resignation and it read: "May I have a parting recommendation on mission policy for whatever it is worth. It rests on the premise: the policy of employing missionaries for life is outdated..."]

*Well, that's one man's opinion. It's not mine.*

~~As I hear it stated in many different forms,~~ The argument that the missionary movement is ended rests on three major assumptions:

1. The day of the professional, life-career missionary is past because every Christian is a missionary.
2. The day of the foreign missionary is past because there is a church now in every land and it is the business of that church to evangelize its own territory., and
3. The day of the Western missionary is past because Western missions are fatally associated with political imperialism, dollar diplomacy, cultural aggression and ecclesiastical paternalism.

Now there is enough truth in those statements to make a flat denial impossible. Every Christian is, in a sense, a missionary, or at least ought to be. And the church in every land is responsible for evangelizing its own territory. And Western missions certainly do have built-in handicaps that weaken their Christian witness. ~~All that is true. But I want to contest very strongly the implied conclusion that we Westerners should therefore abandon missions.~~ Granted that all this is true, what makes you think *that that means* the day of the missionary is past?

1. Take the first argument: <sup>they say,</sup> the day of the professional missionary is past because every Christian is a missionary. J.C. Hoekendijk, the visiting professor of missions at Union Seminary, N.Y. put it quite explicitly. "Missions will in an ever-decreasing degree be the main responsibility of set-apart professionals and, probably, will also include less and less specially organized efforts."

Now if he had put it positively, and said (in the jargon of the profession) that the organized missionary movement must make more room for flexible, mobile (ad hoc, para-missionary) lay participation in world-wide Christian outreach, I would be glad to agree with him. Out in Korea we have had a professor from Columbia University's Medical School, and the Director of a foreign-investment corporation, and a student taking a year's study abroad--all three loosely attached to our mission on a short-time basis, and I wouldn't give them up for anything. They opened up whole new corridors of doors to the gospel. But one of the major reasons for their effectiveness was they they supplemented and enlarged, they did not replace and make obsolete the work of their "professional" "set-apart" missionary colleagues, any more than the professional missionary can replace the Korean <sup>(or Taiwanese)</sup> pastor. Our mission challenge of the future is going to be so immense and so varied that we are going to need all the new forms of mission we can devise, without giving up any of the old forms that work.

So don't tell me that the day of the professional, career missionary is past because every Christian is a missionary. That was the argument that killed the Student Volunteer Movement. In the name of being

fair to everyone, it tried to abolish functional distinctions in Christendom. What's the difference between foreign missionaries and home missionaries, they asked. Nothing--only that the foreign missionary gets a furlough and a halo. And why distinguish between the missionary and any other kind of full-time Christian worker--the minister, for example? For that matter, why reserve the "full-time Christian worker" label for the professionals. Aren't laymen supposed to be full-time Christians? Abolish these invidious distinctions. Abolish the professional. Every Christian is a missionary.

It sounds so fine, so Christian. I only wish it were more Biblical. "Every Christian is a missionary" is a practical fallacy and a semantic evasion. What it is trying to say is "Every Christian should be a witnessing Christian" which is a very different thing. Functional distinctions in Christian service are an absolutely necessary tool for effective action. They are as old as the Christian church itself. "Now you are the body of Christ", wrote Paul to Corinth (I Cor. 12: 27-29), "and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first missionaries (the Greek word, of course, is "apostle", missionary is the Latin), second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles (missionaries)? Are all prophets? Are all teachers...?"

You see. "Are all missionaries?" No. We still need the distinction--the professional, Biblically set-apart missionary. What is everybody's business soon becomes nobody's business. Christian mission without professionals is as arrant nonsense to me as an American moon-landing without professionals. It took 400,000 people (professionals), and 20,000 factories (read missions) working together for an accepted, focussed goal to put a man on the moon. I submit that world evangelism--reaching the world for Christ--is of a higher priority than a moon landing--reaching the moon for man. And our Christian world mission demands no less intense, professional dedication and skill. We still need the professionals.

II. The second argument against missionaries is: The day of the foreign missionary is past because there is a church now in every land, and it is the business of that church to evangelize its own territory.

*Sometimes I think this has become the operative mission strategy of the United Presbyterian ch. "let the proper ch. do it" "let George do it" So we pile back on numerous - 1966-1992 1976-402 (29 mbr 40)*  
That argument is not only unBiblical, it is un-ecumenical. In essence it is a reversion to nationalistic regionalism. America first! Let the Americans evangelize America. Or Egypt first. Let the Copts evangelize Egypt. This is no bright pattern for a new day in missions, as some would have us believe. It is what Bishop Stephen Neill calls "a descent into the pit of ecclesiastical nationalism".

Don't tamper with the Great Commission. It does not read, "Go ye into all the world...unless there is already a church there." There was a church in Rome, but Paul went to Rome. And going to Rome, he felt, was the climax of his mission. There was a church in England when Augustine went to Canterbury, the Celtic church. But Augustine went to England, and it was no betrayal of missionary policy. It was one of the great turning points in English church history. There was a church in India in 1708 when Ziegenbalg went to Tranquebar--the St. Thomas church. But Ziegenbalg went to India, and it was the beginning of the modern

missionary movement.

The existence of the church in every land is no kind of an argument against the future of the missionary. The question is, can any church finish the task alone, and I believe the answer is no. [Rome needed Paul, and England needed Augustin, and Taiwan still needs you.] I know of no church in any land in Asia, Africa or Latin America which is in a position to grapple alone with the overwhelming evangelistic opportunities of the next two generations. The annual increase of population in <sup>most of</sup> the lands of the younger churches--just the annual increase--is larger than their entire Protestant communities, ~~in most countries.~~

[The <sup>planting</sup> ~~existence~~ of the church in these lands has of course ~~drastically~~ altered the future of the missionary, but it has not abolished it.]

III. The third general argument against the future of the missionary movement is that the day of the Western missionary is past because Western missionaries are fatally associated with imperialism, dollar diplomacy, cultural aggression and ecclesiastical paternalism. How well I remember one black day in Korea during a church split when a Korean pastor, whose faction had just lost a vote in presbytery, came storming up to my house, screaming "You bought that presbytery with your cursed dollars."

Mountain

Now I hadn't. I didn't have enough dollars to buy a pastor, much less a presbytery. <sup>example of the</sup> But, perhaps it would be better to stop defending ourselves all the time and learn to accept criticism. Precisely to the extent that we are still associated with political imperialism, precisely to the extent that we do sometimes use what dollars we have unwisely, precisely to the extent that we give the impression that we patronize and feel superior--<sup>to that extent</sup> our Christian mission will have a very bleak future in the days ahead. <sup>the best</sup> And what a blessing it is to see in our day the rise of non-Western missions. Our newest venture in Korea is an Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission (we call it ACTS). Its location is Korea, but its focus is all Asia, and Asian missions to Asia. For the West has no monopoly on mission. We received the gospel from Asia. And Asia, Africa. Latin America and the West all belong together in mission.

So we are Western. There's really nothing much a Westerner can do about being Western. That's the way we are packaged, and rather than feel so guilty about it, if you are willing to be a Christian and a missionary, and ask God to help you, He will see that your Western-ness doesn't cancel out your love for the people you work with, and doesn't negate your missionary zeal. Even a Westerner can learn to adjust and adapt himself into the right place on the mission field, and sometimes even in Asia a Westerner is still more acceptable than a different kind of Asian.

But it does take adjustment and adaptation. The New York r some years ago told the story of a motorist caught in a traffic tie-up on the George Washington Bridge. Suddenly he saw an opening in the next lane and

swung his wheel hard and squeezed in between a couple o cars on his left. Just as he swung in, the car ahead of him stalled. The driver of that car was looking back and gesticulating at him frantically. He figured the man was asking for a push, so he eased into the rear bumper, gave the engine a little gas and pushed. As he did so, the car behind banged into his rear bumper. He signalled the driver astern to stay away, gave another push to the stalled car, and again was struck from behind. This made him angry, and he was about to give the driver a pice of his mind when a police car pulled up alongside. "I'm trying to shove this car to get it started," he shouted to the police, "and the idiot behind me keeps banging into me." "Look, Mac," said the cop. "The guy you're pushing is pulling the car behind you. You're on top of the tow rope."

There is a place now, and there always will be a place for the foreign missionary, but it is not on top of the tow rope. We have been told that we do not belong out in front, pulling. That's paternalism. So now, perhaps we have run around behind to push--and in so doing have fouled up the tow-rope.

We don't belong ahead or behind, either one. We belong with. We belong in. Like Him who said, "Behold I am among you as one who serves." But to get there we still have to go. Perhaps the best thing I could say about mission today is something I learned from a teen-ager in a yo th panel at a conference several years ago. We were talking about evangelism, and the panel moderator asked, "Where would you take someone you really wanted to reach for Jesus Christ?" And one of the girls said, "You know, I don't think I'd take him. I think ~~for~~ I'd go to him."

*There are 2 billion out there who have not yet been effectively reached for Jesus Christ. The human race is just dying. And the chick is not dead.*

*That's what makes a missionary.*  
 The missionary is the one who goes. And as long as it takes going to reach people for Jesus Christ, there are going to have to be missionaries. *will. who are willing to send them.*

